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Institutional arrangements for the Sustainable Development Goals

Note by the Secretariat

The Secretariat has the honour to transmit to the Committee of Experts on Public Administration the paper prepared by Committee members Jan Ziekow and Rowena Bethel. The content of the paper and the views expressed therein are those of the authors and do not imply any expression of opinion on the part of the United Nations.

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Institutional arrangements for the Sustainable Development Goals

Summary

Given the integrated nature of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the impacts of different policies should not be regarded in isolation, but rather considered with respect to the synergies and trade-offs among all of the Sustainable Development Goals and targets and sustainable development as a whole. The methodological changes that such a holistic approach entails will place significant demands on policy formulation and implementation processes and on political and administrative systems in enhancing capacities to address important interactions among the Goals.

In the present paper, it is argued that, at the level of central government, horizontal policy integration is best suited to the coherence requirements of the Sustainable Development Goals. In procedural terms, this calls for mechanisms able to overcome the sort of fragmentation that results from the silo organization of government, which in turn calls for a mix of arrangements at both the strategic and operational levels. Among these arrangements are various organizational measures involving both government administration and parliaments and entailing, inter alia, budgetary incentives and the training of civil servants.

The national, regional and local levels of government also have to interact with one another in order to achieve comprehensive policy integration. To this end, vertical coordination is required. Dialogue with various stakeholders will be essential, in particular to localize the national sustainable development strategy. A multi-stakeholder approach that includes actors from civil society, businesses, citizens and the scientific community can help to address the integrated and inclusive nature of the Sustainable Development Goals. Steps must be taken in particular to engage vulnerable groups in the discourse to ensure adherence to the principle of leaving no one behind.

In the present paper, it is noted that the qualities inherent in information and communications technologies (ICTs) are aligned with the most effective means by which institutional arrangements may be enhanced, reorganized or adjusted to achieve the 2030 Agenda. ICTs provide important infrastructure in support of institutional arrangements, since they enable collaborative, integrated and coordinated action across public sector agencies and between the public sector and other actors. They also facilitate transparent and accountable government, allow for the harnessing of large amounts of data in policy and planning and provide analytical tools for measuring progress on the Goals and targets, among other features. ICTs are therefore critical enablers of the institutional arrangements underpinning implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

I. Necessary conditions and requirements of institutional arrangements in support of the Sustainable Development Goals

A. From the Millennium Development Goals to the Sustainable Development Goals

1. The United Nations Millennium Declaration, adopted at the Millennium Summit of the United Nations in September 2000, was a milestone on the way towards a more just world. The Declaration committed countries to a new global partnership to reduce extreme poverty and set out a series of time-bound targets with a deadline of 2015, which became known as the Millennium Development Goals.

2. Comprising 8 goals and 18 targets, the Millennium Development Goals were formulated by sector and aimed at improving conditions in developing countries. They therefore prompted changes in sectoral policies to promote progress towards their achievement, in particular in low-income developing countries. Some countries, for example, introduced free primary education to ensure that by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, would be able to complete a full course of primary schooling. Others called for projects to reduce the proportion of people suffering from hunger, while still others introduced new institutional arrangements to promote targets associated with environmental sustainability. Many developing countries approached the challenge by taking a combination of actions to implement the various goals concurrently, on these fronts and others.

3. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted at the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit in September 2015, has at its core a set of 17 Sustainable Development Goals and 169 targets. The Sustainable Development Goals expand and build on the achievements of the Millennium Development Goals with a continuing commitment to development priorities such as poverty eradication, health, education, food security and nutrition. Given the specific challenges, in particular in reaching those who are most vulnerable, these processes of sectorally strengthening institutions and policies will likely continue.

4. In its scope, however, the framework of the 2030 Agenda goes far beyond the Millennium Development Goals and pledges common action across a substantially broader policy agenda that sets out a wide range of economic, social and environmental objectives, inter alia, promising peaceful and inclusive societies and defining means of implementation. Importantly, the Sustainable Development Goals are to be taken as integrated and indivisible. In addition, the 2030 Agenda is universal in nature. The Sustainable Development Goals apply to all countries, both developing and developed, and embody a fundamental commitment to leaving no one behind. Moreover, they are inclusive by design, underscore equity and equality as universal aims and stress the essential need for partnership and cooperation among all segments of society and at all levels.

B. Methodological challenges in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals

5. Given the integrated nature of the 2030 Agenda, the impacts of different policies should not be regarded in isolation, but rather considered with respect to the synergies and trade-offs among all of the Goals and targets and sustainable development as whole. The systemic changes that such a holistic approach entails will place significant demands on policy formulation and implementation processes, and in particular on political and administrative systems in enhancing capacities to address important interactions among the Sustainable Development Goals and targets.

6. While some Goals are known to correlate strongly with one another and tend to be addressed simultaneously, although not necessarily with the same intensity, other Goals may be related only very weakly or in ways that are difficult to identify. In the case where interlinkages may not be readily apparent, there is an attendant risk of not recognizing possible synergies and trade-offs, which could have important ramifications. To address this problem, it can be helpful to assess potential interactions in two steps.

7. Firstly, the Sustainable Development Goals should be understood as a network of two interlinked levels of objectives, one of Goals and the other of targets. Methodologically, this step draws on principles of network theory in order to identify a set of relationships between Goals and targets that can be used in further analysis, acknowledging that these relationships may vary across and within countries.[1]

8. Secondly, any policy, decision or measure should be assessed with respect to its impact on all other Goals and targets. This means thinking holistically by taking into account all potential effects and all interlinkages among different effects. For example, extending agricultural production may contribute to raising the number of jobs (Goal 8) to address poverty reduction (Goal 1) and reduce hunger (Goal 2), but at the same time can lead to higher demand for energy (Goal 7) and water (Goal 6), with potential conflict over the use of resources (Goal 16) and negative impacts on climate action (Goal 13) and the sustainable use of biodiversity and ecosystem services (Goals 14 and 15). Missing one effect and its interlinkages to other Goals will provide an incomplete picture, with the possibility that none of the Goals concerned will be achieved sustainably.

9. The Sustainable Development Goals require Governments to carefully consider nationally adapted priorities and strategies to achieve them at all institutional levels, including target and policy adaptation, anticipatory policymaking and programme design and the measurement of progress towards achievement of the Goals. The United Nations Development Group summarizes these comprehensive demands on implementation with reference to "mainstreaming", which is described as landing the 2030 Agenda at the national and

[1] See, for example, David Le Blanc, "Towards integration at last? The sustainable development goals as a network of targets", Department of Economic and Social Affairs working paper No. 141 (March 2015). Available from www.un.org/esa/desa/papers/2015/wp141_2015.pdf.

local levels and integrating it into national, subnational and local plans for development and subsequently into budget allocations.[2]

10. The "no one left behind" principle also places high demands on institutional arrangements for the Sustainable Development Goals. There is, first of all, the willingness of Governments to prioritize the principle and align all policies and institutions with it. Governments have to be aware that the needs of all, and especially of marginalized groups, will need an institutionalized mechanism in order to be heard. This could take the form of a dedicated ministerial unit, structural provision for parliamentary work (see section C below), a multi-stakeholder committee (see section E below) or a watchdog function.

11. It is also important to align policymaking with institutional arrangements beyond organizational initiatives. The form such arrangements take will depend on each country's political tradition and culture. In most countries, the creation of a legal framework will be the appropriate measure. The "no one left behind" principle could be linked to such a framework on two levels. Since leaving no one behind should be a guiding concern in all policymaking, the promulgation of the principle could be anchored in a framework law that comprises general guidelines, indicates responsible actors and sets out procedures for its mainstreaming. On another level, special laws could codify specific guidelines for addressing the needs of marginalized and vulnerable groups.

12. Finally, the collection and analysis of statistics should be considered. The use of aggregated data, such as the national average values used with regard to the Millennium Development Goals, does not allow for the differentiated analysis of the status or level of development of different segments of the population. The use of aggregate figures does not make it possible to quantify changes in the situation of vulnerable groups. Therefore, collection of disaggregated data that can enable detailed monitoring of the situation of even small segments of the population should be assured.[3]

C. Horizontal coordination

13. One of the most important institutional arrangements for the Sustainable Development Goals is horizontal coordination. Alongside the term "coordination", there are often references to horizontal integration and occasionally to horizontal coherence. For the purposes of the present paper, the term "horizontal integration" is understood to be the expected result of the Goals, an outcome that includes the different dimensions of sustainable development expressed in the Goals. Horizontal coordination, by contrast, supports horizontal integration and refers to a process that merges different contributions for the overall achievement of the Goals.[4]

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[2] United Nations Development Group, "Mainstreaming the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: reference guide to United Nations country teams" (New York, February 2016), p. 9. Available from https://undg.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/UNDG-Mainstreaming-the-2030-Agenda-Reference-Guide-Final-1-February-2016.pdf.

[3] Ibid., pp. 77 ff.

[4] Evert Meijers and Dominic Stead, "Policy integration: what does it mean and how can it be achieved? A multi-disciplinary review", paper presented at the Berlin Conference on the Human Dimensions of Global Environmental Change, Berlin, 3 and 4 December 2004, pp. 4 ff. Available from http://userpage.fu-berlin.de/ffu/akumwelt/bc2004/download/meijers_stead_f.pdf.

14. A primary challenge for institutional arrangements is fragmentation and narrow perspectives caused by organizational silos in government. In policymaking, this can lead to the neglect of aspects that fall outside the respective sectoral functions. A common means of coordinating silo-based organizations is through a form of negative coordination, in which organizational entities examine an initiative strictly from the perspective of their own jurisdiction.[5] The need to minimize the negative effects of the segregation of policy domains is widely accepted and has long been a point of discussion in connection with policy integration. In practice, however, policy integration has proven to be a challenge.

15. To a considerable degree, these challenges arise from disincentives to policy integration from the perspective of sectoral actors. The necessity of coordinating policy content with other sectoral institutions, or even of working together jointly, requires a lot of short-term effort, while any successes tend to manifest themselves only in the longer term. Even then, achievements cannot usually be attributed to institutions individually. In addition, budgets are most commonly allocated according to sectoral criteria. The additional expense of horizontal coordination for policy integration may not be supported by the treasury or tax authorities.

16. Such problems notwithstanding, there are good reasons for the sectoral organization of government institutions, among others the expertise of specialized departments, the effectiveness and efficiency of decision-making and clarity of responsibility that comes from an established hierarchy. The Sustainable Development Goals have shifted attention to policy integration. Without effective horizontal coordination, however, the integrated approach of the Goals cannot be taken. The development of new institutional arrangements that do not overstrain the existing sectoral organization and at the same time allow for horizontal coordination is therefore required.

17. The following institutional arrangements among central authorities at the national level may be considered:[6]

(a) A management committee could be established at the level of executive head of the Government. This committee should consist of high-ranking individuals who are responsible for the development of cross-sectoral policies. The central Government (the office of the Prime Minister or equivalent executive body) must hold the presidency. The exclusive assignment of the guiding role to the central Government alone, however, will not lead to horizontal coordination;

(b) For real coordination at the working level, a second committee (a steering group or coordination committee) should be established among the sectoral bodies. The members of this committee should be officials with sufficient rank that they can take on a coordinating role within their sector and at the same time be so positioned within the hierarchy (usually lower) so as to be able to handle both strategic control and questions about the content of policies;

[5] Renate Mayntz and Fritz Scharpf, *Policy-Making in the German Federal Bureaucracy*, (Amsterdam, Elsevier, 1975), p. 147.

[6] Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, "The institutional framework of sustainable development in the Arab region: integrated planning for the post-2015" (New York, 2015), p. ix ff. Available from http://css.escwa.org.lb/SDPD/3572/3-Institutions.pdf.

(c) While the aforementioned committees should be standing bodies, horizontal coordination will additionally require cross-sectoral project management. For this purpose, cross-organizational working groups can be set up to develop concrete programmes or measures for implementation. Members of these project groups are to be drawn from the sectoral specialists who form the backbone of the organization. By working together in various projects, these specialists will learn to think beyond their own specialization and consider other elements and perspectives;

(d) Lastly, horizontal coordination must be supported by budgetary inducements. These could be, for example, incentives for cross-sectoral policymaking or implementation in the budget or in a joint budget of the sectoral organizations for working in horizontal coordination.

18. It is not possible to arrange effective horizontal coordination simply by applying the top-down principle. Therefore, the practice found in some countries of assigning the responsibility of policy coordination among all relevant actors to one ministry, while the other ministries are responsible for sectoral policies, may not be very promising. Instead, an overarching sustainability strategy that integrates the sectoral perspective of each individual ministry is required. Horizontal coordination has to be aimed at substantive policy integration, which can only be achieved by understanding the joint task undertaken by all of the "silos". A formal coordinating role can support such a policy if the Sustainable Development Goals are given the highest priority at the top level of government. Only the central Government, that is, the office of the President or Prime Minister, could take on the central steering function.

19. Furthermore, sectoral institutions are often embedded in different policy environments and develop different cultures. They therefore may not necessarily be prepared to communicate well within an integrated approach. This fact has to be considered when creating institutional arrangements, as does the education and training of employees. Technology experts typically communicate on a different semantic level than experts in social policy, for example. If silo-like organizations do not have the capacity to engage in integrated approaches, horizontal coordination efforts will be largely unsuccessful.

20. In addition to personnel aspects, an electronic communications structure is needed to enable the collection and analysis of data for the relevant Sustainable Development Goal indicators, promote interoperability in support of horizontal and vertical coordination and facilitate the inclusion of additional stakeholders. The question of information and communications technologies (ICTs) is discussed further below.

21. While the aforementioned horizontal coordination arrangements start with the organization, the facilities, technical equipment and qualified staff are essential to ensuring that policy coordination can be implemented in practice. Of particular importance are performance and impact assessments, which ensure that national sustainable development targets are taken into account in the various programmes of and measures taken by State authorities. Moreover, the application of impact assessments at the project level, for which local authorities are in most cases responsible, would enable nationally developed sustainable development goals to be anchored more firmly at the local level.

22. Although the national government administration will usually bear the main responsibility for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, in many countries the final political decision will lie in the hands of the parliament. Although discussions about the best way to achieve goals are an essential part of the political discourse, the outcome of the political process should be accepted by all of the main stakeholders. The task of formulating national sustainable development strategies should thus be borne jointly by parliament and the Government. In this regard, it is crucial to avoid conflicts between the Government and parliament concerning the adoption and implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals nationally; for this purpose, rules have to be established, at the constitutional level if necessary.

23. Parliaments also engage in the process of achievement of the Goals. The parliament, as the representative of the people, is established to make the needs of people heard so that no one will be left behind. To put this theoretical starting point into practice in parliamentary work and bring the Goals to life, structural reforms may need to be undertaken. One method could be the implementation of quotas for minorities and marginalized groups in general elections, depending on constitutional requirements. Another option could be the establishment of a mixed parliamentary committee with members from various social groups and from among elected representatives. As a watchdog of sorts, this committee could scrutinize and comment on the alignment of all parliamentary drafts with the "no one left behind" principle. It could play a central role in parliamentary discussions and decisions and in the assessment of the impacts of proposed policies on different social groups.

24. Proposals submitted for consideration and debate in parliament are frequently treated using a sectoral model, as they are when discussed by special committees with different expertise. Plenary debates cannot compensate for this silo approach, since they address politics and not policy integration. Nonetheless, coordination with a view to policy integration within parliament could occur in several ways, such as:

(a) By holding joint meetings of parliamentary committees to discuss specific issues, bills or programmes before final decisions are taken;

(b) By establishing a special parliamentary committee that brokers and ensures integrated approaches to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals;

(c) By establishing a mixed parliamentary committee with members from various social groups and from among elected representatives;

(d) By mainstreaming the Sustainable Development Goals in budgetary decision-making, given the steering and controlling role of the budget in the actions of government administration.

D. Vertical coordination

25. The primary responsibility for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals lies with national Governments. They must serve as the engine that triggers awareness of the significance of the Goals and repeatedly reminds others of their importance. They must ensure that institutional arrangements for effectively pursuing the Goals are in place. However, even highly developed horizontal

integration mechanisms at the national level will not be enough to ensure awareness and coherence on their own.

26. Subnational levels of government are closer to citizens and often have a better understanding of their needs and particularities. To a great extent, public services are delivered and infrastructure built at the local level. Many policy objectives relevant for the achievement of the Goals are heavily dependent on actions taken at the local level. Local institutions and regional authorities tend to be organized in a more holistic and less sectoral manner than government ministries at the national level. This can facilitate horizontal coordination at the local and regional levels, where it may be possible to gain fundamental insights into how to pursue sustainable development objectives through dialogue with citizens, businesses and civil society actors. Such small-scale discourses can be more flexible, spontaneous and innovative than attempts to include stakeholders in consultations at the national level.[7]

27. Vertical coordination arrangements should be in place to allow for policy integration among national, regional and local governments. However, when there are a large number of municipalities, coordination with every municipality may not be possible. In such cases, it may be advisable to establish coordinating organizations on a voluntarily basis or to make use of an already existing organization that could act as an intermediary for policy integration between the national and the local levels. Such entities can transmit the Sustainable Development Goals from the national to the local level, thus enabling local authorities to develop their own sustainability strategies and goals, in other words, localizing targets.[8] In addition, the national Government should provide advisory services to assist municipalities in the development of their sustainability strategies and orientation towards the national sustainable development goals. The development of local indicators through public discourse with local people, with consideration given to the national level indicators and context, is a suitable method to produce local ownership of the process.

28. In summary, vertical coordination institutional arrangements for the Sustainable Development Goals should:

(a) Empower disadvantaged people and marginalized communities and geographical regions to enable them to participate fully in the economic life of the country;

(b) Promote local ownership, community involvement, local leadership and joint decision-making at the local level;

(c) Use local resources and skills and maximize opportunities for development;

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[7] Ingeborg Niestroy, "Sustainable development goals at the subnational level: roles and good practices for subnational governments", SDPlanNet briefing note (May 2014), p. 4. Available from www.iisd.org/sites/default/files/publications/sdplannet_sub_national_roles.pdf.

[8] See Paul Smoke and Hamish Nixon, "Sharing responsibilities and resources among levels of government: localizing the Sustainable Development Goals", paper for the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (January 2016). Available from http://workspace.unpan.org/sites/Internet/Documents/UNPAN95873.pdf.

(d) Involve local, national and international partnerships between communities, businesses and government to solve problems;

(e) Rely on flexible approaches to respond to changing circumstances at the local, national and international levels.

E. Multi-stakeholder approaches

29. The integrated nature of the Sustainable Development Goals requires common and/or joint efforts of the political powers, government institutions, civil society actors, businesses, common citizens and the scientific community. It is not sufficient to consider only the different experiences, knowledge and views of elected representatives, even at the local level. Moreover, ensuring public involvement through institutional arrangements can strengthen the position of the political leadership vis-à-vis influential sectoral interests.

30. Nonetheless, participation in the discussion regarding the Goals cannot be left only to the aforementioned stakeholders. This would lead to the exclusion of disadvantaged segments of society from discussions on issues of direct relevance to them, their opportunities in life being a main focus of the Goals. A multi-stakeholder approach requires the creation of arenas for structured discourse so that all groups have the maximum opportunity to make their case, with contributions carefully prepared and supporting materials and research gathered.

31. There are several ways of promoting such a dialogue. The most basic option is to conduct stakeholder consultations, which can be done in different ways. The easiest way is the establishment of an electronic consultation platform where proposed strategies, programmes and measures can be introduced and shared for discussion. However, from participation research it is known that such a simple method privileges those who already enjoy a relatively advantageous position. Therefore, in order to produce the highest possible level of ownership among as many stakeholders as possible, preference should be given to the implementation of open consultation forums in multiple locations across the country, with all interested persons having an opportunity to participate.

32. A more sophisticated alternative to basic consultation is the institutionalization of multi-stakeholder bodies in which key stakeholders are represented. The gathering of a variety of perspectives allows such bodies to formulate substantial ideas for integrated and inclusive policymaking. Moreover, their work can be integrated into strategy formulation as well as monitoring and evaluation processes. National councils for sustainable development and similar bodies exist in many countries.[9] The members of these bodies should be stakeholders from different sectors of the economy and civil society. They can also include government officials. A key condition is that these councils have access to the highest levels of ministries and to the head of Government, while remaining independent and not being an instrument of the Government.

[9] See Derek Osborn, Jack Cornforth and Farooq Ullah, "National councils for sustainable development: lessons from the past and present", SDPlanNet briefing note (April 2014). Available from https://www.iisd.org/sites/default/files/publications/sdplannet_lessons_from_the_past.pdf.

33. A third option entails a network-like structure with a lesser degree of institutionalization. Such arrangements can be formed by raising public awareness of the Goals, which can inspire autonomous dialogue among stakeholders; this may be more innovative and effective if conducted fairly and on an equal basis. To ensure this and for the stability of the network, a network governance approach should be adopted by the national, subnational and/or local governments concerned.

34. In addition to the aforementioned instruments of stakeholder inclusion, it may be beneficial to institutionalize partnerships with individual stakeholders or groups of stakeholders who can make key contributions to the achievement of the Goals. These partnerships can be with particular social groups and civil society actors, in particular those involving marginalized groups, as well as Goal-oriented public-private partnerships with private companies.

F. The case of Germany

35. The case of Germany provides an illustration of an institutional architecture for sustainable development, in particular with regard to mechanisms of horizontal and vertical coordination.[10]

36. In Germany, the head of Government, the Federal Chancellery, is responsible for horizontal coordination and for consistently updating the national sustainable development strategy. The Head of the Federal Chancellery presides over the State Secretaries' Committee for Sustainable Development, in which the State secretaries of all ministries are represented. The duties of this political committee are the central steering of the sustainability strategy, the coordination of the relevant programmes and measures of the individual ministries and the development of strategic impulses for government policy.

37. A working group of heads of subdepartments from the working level of all ministries complements this political steering committee at a specialized level. The Federal Chancellery holds the presidency of the working group. The duties of the working group entail the technical preparation and implementation of the resolutions of the State Secretaries' Committee, as well as the coordination of working-level activities relevant to sustainability issues.

38. For parliamentary guidance on the sustainability strategy, the German parliament has established a parliamentary advisory council on sustainable development, whose membership comprises 17 Members of Parliament representing all political groups. The Parliamentary Advisory Council provides opinions and recommendations that contribute to the decisions at the plenary sessions and by expert committees of the parliament and can launch parliamentary initiatives for the incorporation of sustainability aspects in different policies.

39. A sustainability impact assessment is required for all drafts of laws and regulations. This consists of an ex ante evaluation that examines, from a cross-sectoral perspective, the impacts of a planned regulation with regard to

[10] Germany, *Report of the German Federal Government to the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development 2016* (Berlin, July 2016). Available from https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/10686HLPF-Bericht_final_EN.pdf.

sustainability, as well as the Sustainable Development Goals. The draft sustainability impact assessment, conducted by the ministry in charge, is then presented to the Parliamentary Advisory Council, which is responsible for verifying that the sustainability evaluation is in order. In the event that it is found to be lacking, the Council will demand its revision. In a new initiative, the Government of Germany will introduce another element into the legislative process: the introduction of e-participation, whereby all citizens, companies and civil society actors will have the opportunity to comment on bills using electronic means. This will generate a multi-stakeholder discourse that includes different perspectives and reveals different overlooked relationships, connections and/or conflicts of the Sustainable Development Goals.

40. Coordination with the local level takes place in different ways. On the one hand, there is an interministerial working group that works together with local authorities. On the other hand, regional network hubs for sustainability have been established. These hubs are intended primarily to help to link the sustainability initiatives of the three levels: the Federal Government, state governments and local authorities. Furthermore, a service centre has been set up by the responsible Federal Ministry in order to assist local authorities in the development of local sustainability strategies.

41. All institutional arrangements in Germany are based on the national sustainable development strategy. The strategy is reviewed and enhanced at regular intervals every four years. The evaluation process involves an independent peer review conducted by an international team of experts. The results of the peer review, as well as figures from the monitoring and evaluation of the established indicators, are to be contained in the Government's progress report. Citizens have the opportunity to engage in a dialogue on the strategy, conducted through regional conferences throughout Germany. The updated draft of the new sustainability strategy is expected to be published on the Internet, so that anyone can comment on it.

42. The multi-stakeholder approach is institutionally secured by the German Council for Sustainable Development, whose members are drawn from the economic, civil society and scientific sectors, thereby representing the breadth of the three sustainability dimensions. The Council is not bound by any directive and has the duty to contribute to the further development of the national sustainable development strategy and to specify concrete action, as well as possible projects. In this regard, the Council has published recommendations on the further development of the German sustainability architecture for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.[11] An example of an activity of the Council related to non-governmental institutions is the development of the German Sustainability Code, in which private companies can present their sustainability-related activities and report on compliance with 20 established criteria.

[11] German Council for Sustainable Development, "Deutsche Nachhaltigkeits-Architektur und SDGs" (German sustainability architecture and sustainable development goals, May 2015). Available from www.nachhaltigkeitsrat.de/fileadmin/_migrated/media/RNE_Stellungnahme_Deutsche_Nachhaltigkeits-Architektur_und_SDG_26-05-2015.pdf.

II. Information and communications technologies to support institutional arrangements for the Sustainable Development Goals

A. Salient features of effective institutional arrangements in support of the Sustainable Development Goals

43. Having considered the main methodological challenges of the Sustainable Development Goals, it is helpful to take a more in-depth look at the actual mechanics underlying these attributes through the strategic exploitation of ICTs. The Goals specifically invite an analysis of the root causes of poverty and inequality around the three dimensions of social, economic and environmental considerations, setting the fundamental policy foundation for a far more integrated and open public administration than currently exists.

44. It is generally accepted that the machinery of public administration requires significant paradigm shifts in order to meet the simple but impactful ideal of the Sustainable Development Goals, that no one should be left behind. This is the case regardless of whether the shift involves maintaining to some degree the current arrangements, such as silos. The Goals require an understandable, user-friendly public administration framework that looks at each person or stakeholder (real and corporate) that it services, both in a holistic way and from each individual perspective. Additionally, external demands such as those embodied in various multilateral governance standards, including the Financial Sector Assessment Programme of the International Monetary Fund, the anti-money-laundering recommendations of the Financial Action Task Force and the international tax cooperation agenda of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, call for levels of transparency, accessibility and openness regarding the activities of public administration, which have yet to be met by many countries.

45. The authors have acknowledged that the aims of the Sustainable Development Goals are to increase the capacity of the political and administrative systems for the processing of complex demands, recognizing that people and their circumstances inherently present a complex web of consequential influences. However, in order to tackle the issues from which these influences spring, it is important to understand the influences from each stakeholder's perspective. To this end, there is a critical requirement to ensure:

(a) Adequate access to information on how public administration works, policy formulation and decision-making;

(b) Greater facilitation for people to present their perspectives and have an ongoing dialogue with public administrators and policymakers, to support more relevant, useful and impactful results;

(c) Ongoing analyses of people's circumstances in a more bespoke way, which must have a view to both pre-emptive and reactive solutions to ensure sustainability. This would involve analyses of the vast amounts of data, present and potential, capable of producing historical patterns and indicative trends, as well as facilitating predictive solutions that lead to sustainable outcomes;

(d) More targeted and effective use of disaggregated data from public and private sources;

(e) Greater collaboration between and among policymakers and public administration, both horizontally and vertically;

(f) Greater policy coherence.

46. It has been argued that when relating institutional arrangements to development, a correlation exists between weak, missing or perverse institutional arrangements and poverty, inequality and resource degradation.[12] The resulting conclusion is that development should not be viewed as necessarily asking for more institutional arrangements, but rather, as seen above, could also mean new and other institutional arrangements that complement the classic hierarchical model of public and private administration.

B. How information and communications technologies have supported institutional arrangements and their importance for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals

47. In the preceding analysis, the authors established the systemic and structural attributes of the institutional arrangements that would support implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. In broad terms, the attributes identified are policy coherence, or "horizontal integration"; transparency; process integration, or "horizontal coordination"; accountability; participatory and inclusive governance; and consistency across decision-making, policy formulation and budgeting. This part of the paper looks at how ICT solutions have supported the institutional arrangements that respond to these attributes.

48. In its overall review of the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society, the General Assembly noted that the digital economy, defined as the worldwide network of economic activities enabled by ICTs, is an important and growing part of the global economy and that a correlation exists between connectivity and increases in gross domestic product. Member States recognized that ICTs contributed to higher levels of social benefit and inclusion and provided new channels among citizens, businesses and Governments to share and augment knowledge and participate in decisions that affect their lives and work. The Assembly acknowledged ICT-enabled breakthroughs in government, including in the provision of public services, education, health care and employment, as well as in business, agriculture and science, with greater numbers of people having access to services and data that might previously have been out of reach or unaffordable.

49. It is the very ability of ICTs to move the world from vision to action with regard to the Sustainable Development Goals that distinguishes the importance of ICT in the public administration sustainability agenda. ICTs offer real-time virtual collaborative environments that enable people to engage in the conduct of public affairs irrespective of time or distance, providing the means for effective,

[12] Radboud University, Centre for International Development Issues, "Institutions in development: strategies for poverty alleviation, participation and empowerment". Available from www.ru.nl/cidin/research/research_programme/institutional/.

comprehensive and affordable citizen engagement. The technology is complemented by:

(a) The "Internet of Things", involving the interconnection, via the Internet, of computing devices embedded in, for example, animals, buildings and vehicles, enabling them to send and receive data;

(b) Artificial intelligence, that is, the theory and development of computer systems able to perform tasks normally requiring human intelligence, such as visual perception, speech recognition, decision-making and translation between languages;

(c) Cloud computing, which involves the use of a network of remote servers hosted on the Internet to store, manage and process data, rather than a local server or a personal computer;

(d) The harnessing and distillation of vast amounts of data to assist with policy planning and the creation of solutions that may be exploited for both horizontal and vertical coordination;

(e) Data and analytical tools for measuring progress and tools for tracking the status of implementation of the Goals and underlying targets.

50. The above-mentioned data and analytical tools are important for satisfying concerned persons about the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, especially at the local level. ICTs, as tools for modernizing the administration of public service delivery, have been mainstreamed into the public governance reform agenda precisely because, for many governments, they provide the infrastructure and platform required to meet the needs of both internal and external stakeholders.

51. It has been argued that ICTs have also been both an important enabler and an initiator of change in institutional arrangements. Firstly, because information is a core component of government institutions, technologies that influence informational resources are seen to trigger institutional change. This has been demonstrated most appreciably in the way in which ICTs have organized information to improve ease of access to public information by actors in the public administration sphere, most notably within various open government data frameworks. It was observed that since information was both a crucial component of policies and an important element of government institutions, the inevitable result was that technology actually induced changes in information patterns that influenced government institutions.

52. Secondly, technologies intrinsically have institutional characteristics and consequently steer institutional change in the direction of controlling the growing complexity of society. Early research in this area indicated that ICT could be regarded as a functional construction to control the growing complexity of society. The characteristics of ICTs that enable this functional construction were highlighted as calculability, control, transparency, communication and virtual reality, and they are attributed to the inherent sociocultural construction of ICTs.[13]

[13] Albert Meijer, "Why don't they listen to us? Reasserting the role of ICT in public administration" (2007), pp. 234-235. Available from www.academia.edu/2739982/Why_dont_they_listen_to_us_Reasserting_the_role_of_ICT_in_Public_Administration.

53. The above-mentioned factors are illustrative of the ways in which ICTs have driven transformation in public administration and related institutional arrangements by their very nature. They therefore may be aligned with the most effective means to enhance, reorganize or adjust institutional arrangements in order to address the 2030 Agenda. While ICTs may not solve all problems, they have been recognized for:

(a) The integrative qualities of the infrastructure they create, which are vital to supporting the whole-of-government, connected, joined-up government approaches to public administration, as they permit connectivity and links between systems and across sectors. They also offer real-time access to information repositories across the public administration machinery;

(b) Their resilience, by creating a virtual operating environment and minimizing risks associated with the collection, storage, custody and movement of physical information assets;

(c) Their dynamism, adaptability and flexibility, which permit system adjustments with comprehensive deployment to reflect changing needs, expectations and circumstances;

(d) Their innovativeness as the ability to offer innovative models for collaboration between actors in the public space, such as social media and one-stop-shop portals, which supports participatory governance, transparency and accountability;

(e) Their effectiveness and efficiency, demonstrated by their ability to accelerate the deployment of solutions.

54. ICTs have also proven to be invaluable in simplifying business processes, within and with government. They create virtual collaboration spaces between agencies, institutions, the public and government and between governments. They reduce time spent on collecting, storing, sharing and analysing information, processing transactions and delivering outcomes. These conditions have been identified as ideal for equipping governments to be participatory, transparent, responsive and accountable.

55. In relation to global initiatives, when the three dimensions of sustainable development are examined, it is evident that they have not only national but also international implications that require countries to improve national e-government initiatives so that, at the international level, the cross-border implications of many national policies may be properly understood, diagnosed and addressed. Sustainable Development Goals 16 and 17 speak to this specifically. At the heart of developing conducive responses, in this context, are the institutional arrangements required for the work to be done. ICTs are the very foundation on which these arrangements may be organized effectively.

56. For many developing countries, including the least developed countries, financing e-government initiatives, among other hurdles such as systemic weaknesses, remains an inhibitor to accelerated enhancements of institutional arrangements conducive to implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. Possible solutions include:

(a) The open-source approach, by which the source code is available to the general public for use and/or modification from its original design free of charge, which can assist countries in meeting many important software needs;

(b) Effectively plugging into the rich and growing big data global ecosystem, which extracts data from multiple global sources in various sectors and is an important resource for development for all countries. The proliferation of cross-border data collection in the private and non-governmental organization space is enormously useful for countries that lack the capacity to secure the strategic partnerships on a commercial basis to develop their own arrangements;

(c) Digitization of the information repositories that exist in hard-copy format. Such repositories can be significant and include medical, education, church and some government records. Vast repositories of useful historical data exist in many countries: the challenge lies in effectively organizing such data in a manner in which their rich properties may be exploited. Additionally, ongoing digitization exercises to ensure that information registries are accessible and usable for policymaking and planning are encouraged in all countries. The use of cloud computing technologies has significantly reduced the need for the physical storage of servers;

(d) Opening up government information and data sets through policies that permit the use and reuse of government data. This requires the provision of these assets in the appropriate format to facilitate exploitation and use, and would support data disaggregation so vitally important for detailed analysis of subsectors and subgroups of society to support the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

C. Strategic role of development cooperation in strengthening information and communications technologies for sustainable development

57. Work on promoting the effective adoption of ICTs has also contributed to levelling the playing field for many developing countries, including the least developed countries, small island developing States and post-conflict countries, through the technical assistance, knowledge and tools made available by the United Nations system. Without this work, the global digital divide would likely be much wider than it currently is. Through needs assessments and guiding toolkits, national and local capacities could be developed over time to harness the potential of e-government in implementing national development goals and targets and in aligning them with global goals, including the 2030 Agenda.

58. Effectively implementing the Sustainable Development Goals through a comprehensive and consistent take-up of ICTs remains an issue faced by many developing countries, especially those in special situations, such as the least developed countries, small island developing States and post-conflict countries, among others. More specifically, cost, coverage, silo methods of public administration, the inadequate utilization of private-public partnership relationships, inadequate or non-existent open government strategies and an inability to effectively harness vast amounts of data beset these countries, leading to a

development divide. If not addressed as part of the public administration agenda, such a divide will delay the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goal targets in these countries.

59. Concerns remain that many developing countries, despite having invested significant sums in the e-government journey, have yet to realize the desired positive outcomes for conducive institutional arrangements. The enhancement of the institutional arrangements that could result from such investments simply has not taken place to the extent required for implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals or, if they have, they have been short-lived. This is particularly noticeable in the absence of a long-term holistic vision, the lag in the implementation of integrative technologies across sectors, the slow uptake of open data policies and the lack of utilization of data analytics to inform policy decisions.

60. With the wide disparity that exists between countries' respective national e-government strategies, there remains value in continuing to look specifically at the role of ICTs in transforming the dynamics of public administration. This is worthwhile not only for the valuable lessons that can be learned from the experiences of those further along the transformational path, but also for the importance of continually putting a spotlight on the inhibitors that have an adverse impact on the advances made by those that are not as far along the path. This group, predominantly of countries that fall outside of the "developed countries" category, stand to benefit the most from a concerted focus on ICTs in seeking to meet what, for most, is an ambitious 2030 Agenda. The continual assessment of national e-government progress globally as an issue of public policy is essential if the overall international plan to leave no one behind is to be achieved in a meaningful, balanced and fair way across societies.

61. Any discussion on reform within public administration, especially at the implementation stage, would appear incomplete without acknowledging the central role of ICTs in bringing about the desired outcomes. Not only do ICTs permit the assessment and conclusions surrounding the fundamental rules and principles to be cast in practical terms, but their very characteristics mean that they can streamline the functions and processes of very complex, competing considerations, providing the linkages that ultimately produce desirable results. A failure to anchor any discussion in this way could handicap many developing countries from having a holistic understanding of what is best, practically, to implement the Sustainable Development Goals in their own respective contexts using ICTs. This is particularly important as a continuity factor, since often the political actors will change over time and the new actors would benefit from updates on the role of ICTs, what they can do to deliver on the Goals as a longer-term objective, and how this can be done most effectively.

62. Not binding the transformation in public administration to an effective and practical implementation of ICT runs somehow counter to the message that the world is moving from commitment to action with regard to the Sustainable Development Goals. While some may regard the issue of ICTs as more appropriate to a technical discussion, such a view runs the risk that the potential facilitating role of ICTs may be overlooked by Member States when considering how best to implement the Goals as a part of a holistic public administration reform agenda. It is recognized that many countries are and have been engaged in this; however, there

are potential drawbacks for less advanced economies, often enticed by the private sector to adopt ICT solutions in a piecemeal way.

63. Member States will be, and have been, courted by many well-meaning industry players seeking to assist with e-government initiatives; however, evidence has shown that in a number of instances, initiatives have been introduced by ministries or departments as stand-alone efforts. The all-important need to ensure that such an e-government infrastructure is implemented in a way that supports policy coherence, integration and coordination across the public administration system therefore does not necessarily occur. The end result is that in some countries, notwithstanding the investment of many millions of dollars in ICT for e-government, the silo approaches have merely been automated and the integration necessary to improve the user experience overlooked and forgotten.

III. Conclusions

64. The Sustainable Development Goals are designed not only for their achievement, but also to account for the systemic changes that the Goals and ways of achieving them imply. The transformational character of the Goals requires a range of institutional arrangements in order to meet the complex demands of sustainability.

65. At the level of central government institutions, horizontal policy integration is best suited to the coherence requirements of the Sustainable Development Goals. Procedurally, this calls for horizontal coordination mechanisms able to overcome the fragmentation of content-related perspectives that result from the silo organization of government, which in turn calls for a mix of arrangements at both the strategic and operational levels, which include organizational measures as well as the creation of budgetary incentives and the training of civil servants. It is also necessary for parliaments to engage in the process of achievement of the Goals.

66. The national, regional and local levels of government have to interact with one another in order to achieve comprehensive policy integration that cuts across levels. To this end, vertical coordination is required alongside horizontal coordination. The national sustainability strategy has to be the point of reference used to orient integration, above all with the local level, where dialogue with different stakeholders should be used in order to "localize" the national strategy.

67. In addition, a multi-stakeholder approach that includes actors from civil society and businesses, as well as citizens and the scientific community, is required in order to take account of and successfully meet the integrated and inclusive concerns of the Sustainable Development Goals. It is of fundamental importance that the most vulnerable people and disadvantaged segments of society are included in the discourse on the achievement of the Goals to ensure that the strategy developed for achieving them adheres to the principle of leaving no one behind.

68. In some respects, the qualities inherent in ICTs are aligned with the most effective means by which institutional arrangements may be enhanced, reorganized or adjusted to achieve the 2030 Agenda. ICTs are ideally suited to providing the infrastructure necessary to support the institutional arrangements, irrespective of time and distance, that are conducive to the effective implementation of the

Sustainable Development Goals, since they offer solutions for collaborative, integrated and coordinated activities across public sector agencies and between the public sector and outside stakeholders and actors.

69. ICTs also offer open government solutions that make governments transparent and accountable; avenues for engagement between governments and stakeholders; the harnessing and distillation of vast amounts of data to assist with policy planning; and data and analytical tools for measuring progress and tools for tracking the status of implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and underlying targets. The vital role of ICTs in attaining the Goals must always be a central part of the policy debate on any public administration reform strategy to implement the Goals.

70. Finally, given the preceding analysis, the authors recommend that governments create a robust framework of legal and organizational structures to consistently realize the "no one left behind" principle, strengthen the involvement of local communities and promote inclusive decision-making processes with a view to localizing the Sustainable Development Goals, and continue to adopt ICTs in order to support institutional arrangements that will underpin implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

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Ensuring effective implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals through leadership, action and means: development of principles of effective governance

Towards a set of internationally recognized principles of responsible and effective governance

Note by the Secretariat

Summary

At its fifteenth session, the Committee of Experts on Public Administration discussed the possibility of developing a set of internationally recognized principles of responsible and effective governance. The Committee agreed that such a set of principles, which should be few in number, expressed in non-technical language and relatively easy for non-specialists to recall, could provide helpful guidance to countries in addressing a broad range of governance issues associated in particular with implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Committee decided to continue with its consideration of the matter at its sixteenth session. The present follow-up note on the subject was prepared by the Secretariat in consultation with Committee members Margaret Saner, Meredith Edwards and Mushtaq Khan.

The note recalls that there are three main governance threads in the 2030 Agenda: institutions that are (a) effective, (b) accountable and (c) inclusive, at all levels. Achievement of these objectives is to be guided by the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and in full respect for international law and human rights, as well as the principle of leaving no one behind and a myriad of other high-level commitments adopted at the United Nations. Such principles of effective governance, while widely agreed and tremendously important, may be largely aspirational for many countries and difficult to achieve in the short term.

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The challenge for many countries is to think about feasible improvements in governance capabilities starting from where they are and to focus pragmatically and selectively on key problem areas according to different contexts and capacities. With this in mind, the present note suggests a way of looking at governance concepts in international agreements and, taking into account the realities of public sector reform dynamics, proposes that principles of effective governance, expressed with an adequate level of detail, should be linked to a variety of good practices to implement them, and possibly in an extended version at a later stage, to operational guidelines and case studies at national and subnational levels.

I. Background

1. At its fifteenth session, the Committee of Experts on Public Administration discussed the possibility of developing a set of internationally recognized principles of governance, drawing on an initial paper prepared by the Secretariat.[1] As part of its continuing effort to provide more action-oriented advice on public administration, the Committee agreed that such a set of principles, which should be few in number, expressed in non-technical language and relatively easy for non-specialists to recall, could indeed provide helpful guidance to countries in addressing a broad range of governance issues, with regard in particular to the ongoing implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

2. The Committee noted that a set of principles of governance could also serve as a benchmark against which propositions such as inclusion, accountability and effectiveness could be tested by civil society groups and academia, among others. The principles might, moreover, inform a global research agenda for public administration and development.

3. The Committee decided to continue with its consideration of the issue at its sixteenth session and requested the Secretariat to prepare a follow-up note on the subject in consultation with interested members. It was stressed that any eventual set of recommendations by the Committee must be guided by the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and grounded in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and international human rights treaties. The effort should also be substantially consistent with the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits, as well as with relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council.

II. Purpose and scope

4. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development embodies a comprehensive, people-centred and universal vision for humanity and the planet. Governance challenges will be correspondingly far-reaching and involve stakeholders at all levels.

5. Governance has been defined as the exercise of economic, political and administrative authority to manage a country's affairs at all levels. It comprises the mechanisms, processes and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights, meet their obligations and mediate their differences.[2] It also describes what States do, their capacity to do these things and how well they do what they are supposed to do. In these definitions, there are indications of both the process of interaction among State and non-state actors and the institutional arrangements that support them. Good governance standards such as those found in the 2030 Agenda are thus aspirational and describe a number of very broadly defined capabilities such as the rule of law, low aggregate levels of corruption and participatory and representative decision-making at all levels.

[1] Available from http://workspace.unpan.org/sites/Internet/Documents/UNPAN96160.pdf.

[2] See United Nations Governance and Public Administration Online Glossary. Available from http://www.unpan.org/Directories/Glossary/tabid/1398/language/en-US/Default.aspx.

6. These characteristics of good governance may not be easy to achieve immediately. The challenge for many countries is to think about feasible improvements in governance capabilities starting from where they are and to focus pragmatically and selectively on key problem areas according to different country contexts and capacities. For many countries the immediate governance capabilities that are relevant may be narrowly defined: how to improve the appointment of bureaucrats, how to improve the construction of infrastructure, or how to reduce specific types of corruption in health delivery, for example. Here the distant good governance aspirations are not much help and can even distract and undermine important initiatives, on the grounds that they do not satisfy the aspirational criteria. The effective governance agenda thus needs to be clarified and made more operational.

7. To illustrate further, some contexts may require specific improvements that may not even look like improvements in good governance in the aspirational sense, for example to enhance the efficiency of tax administration, but these targeted improvements may be necessary to promote development and create the foundation for the broader aspects of good governance to become implementable. Such actions are implicit in, and entirely consistent with, existing long-term aspirational definitions that can be found in the international discourse. A further challenge is to understand the context-specific dynamics and yet have a universal reference point to guide progress in good governance at the national and subnational levels across all the Sustainable Development Goals and targets.

III. Governance concepts in international agreements

Delimitation of broad issue areas

8. In keeping with the mandate of the Committee, the members agreed that the focus of governance principles should be on supporting implementation of the 2030 Agenda, recognizing that the priorities are specific to each country and will be conditioned to a large degree by the political feasibility of particular reforms. In the 2030 Agenda there are three main governance strands:

(a) Effective institutions at all levels;

(b) Accountable institutions at all levels;

(c) Inclusive institutions at all levels.

9. A similar depiction of governance was described in broad strokes during the fifteenth session of the Committee, encapsulating aspects of democratic governance (as set out, for example, in the European Charter of Local Self-Government), stable government (as championed by the international financial institutions) and effective institutions (as elaborated by the Committee and others).

10. In order to establish a solid international footing for a provisional taxonomy, the Secretariat has made an attempt to classify references to major governance principles and practices as contained in some of the more pertinent United Nations documents. This non-exhaustive scan covered, first of all, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as well as the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, the New Urban Agenda,

the United Nations Convention against Corruption and various human rights instruments. A sampling of relevant General Assembly and Economic and Social Council resolutions of the past five years was also included. References were organized by concept (e.g. non-discrimination, participation), element (statement of purpose, definition or generally accepted practice), legal weight (international law or non-binding commitment) and source.

11. The result was the identification of 10 major concepts that might be considered nascent versions of the "principles" within the framework of the main governance strands of the 2030 Agenda: namely effectiveness, accountability and inclusiveness. These concepts could be expressed in their most basic form as follows:

(a) Elements of effectiveness, comprising principles of competence, sound public policy and cooperation;

(b) Elements of accountability, comprising principles of integrity, transparency and independent oversight;

(c) Elements of inclusiveness, comprising principles of non-discrimination, participation, subsidiarity and intergenerational equity.

12. Recalling the Committee's advice that the principles should be few in number, even if there are many attendant practices of an evolving nature, and based on the findings of the initial scan of United Nations commitments, a general taxonomy of principles is shown in the annex to the present note. The taxonomy is a first step and is intended to stimulate discussion of the basic elements of a future set of principles and a conceptual framework for their further elaboration. It is understood that there are other sources from the World Bank, donor agencies, public administration associations, the open government movement and so on, which may need to be taken into account, particularly when it comes to sectoral issues, although these may have less in the way of political backing and legitimacy.

13. There will also be articles of international law that have an impact on, for example, customs and international transport functions. These may be marginal to this exercise in some respects but should be acknowledged. In whatever way they may be arranged, the principles of governance should be useful to public servants and others not only at the national level but also at subnational levels, and across all functions of government, acknowledging that some principles and their expression in practice may have more relevance in some areas than in others.

14. Political systems will naturally also have some bearing on the way that particular governance improvements are realized, but internationally recognized principles should not imply any view on the political systems themselves. In this regard, it is recalled that in its resolution 70/168, the General Assembly reaffirmed that democracy is a universal value based on the freely expressed will of the people to determine their own political, economic, social and cultural systems and their full participation in all aspects of their lives. Just as there is no single model of democracy, there is no single way of organizing responsive and effective institutions, although such institutions may share common features.

Questions of terminology and format

15. The Committee stressed that it was not the intention to "write a book" or "change the meaning of words". It is intended that relevant terms as denoted in various agreements, such as the Charter of the United Nations and the 2030 Agenda, be used as a starting point and connected to relevant references, some of which may constitute definitions of a sort. The aim would be to encapsulate the core meanings of relevant terms although in some instances the terms may have been used precisely because they mean all things to all people.

16. A consensus emerged during the fifteenth session of the Committee that a helpful approach may be to identify widely agreed concepts of effective governance however they may be defined (such as "participation"), articulate them as brief statements of some depth (e.g. "To have an effective State, you must include all significant political groups and opinions in your country and all significant groups must have a chance of influencing policy"), and indicate a number of good practices by which such principles may be realized. The view was that the principles and any related practices should be concrete and substantive while also being sufficiently general and non-prescriptive to elicit broad support.

17. A suggestion was made that there might also be some form of "maturity model" incorporated in the elaboration of a framework with a view to supporting an assessment of the degree of progress in various facets of governance and point out areas of potential improvement, or simply an indication of the priority of certain elements. At the same time, it is acknowledged that a maturity model may more easily apply at the level of operational guidelines, as with the practice of open government. Similarly detailed standards could be linked to the principles and practices of effective governance at a later stage. Indeed, it is likely that a great deal of work has already been undertaken by international organizations and others in the elaboration of operational guidelines in many areas of interest.

Recognition of national initiatives

18. There is a certain level of expectation internationally derived from the key documents as to "professional" standards for a public service, but there is also clearly scope for enhancing performance beyond basic standards. Some countries may have their own legislation that in some cases goes further than that which is internationally agreed. In practice, some countries may try to establish a basic common standard across government, while others might pick certain areas for improvement with a view to transferring the experience to other policy areas.

19. The experience of the Australian National Audit Office may be a case in point. The Office recommends adherence to similar principles of performance orientation, openness, transparency and integrity, and effective collaboration, but also with mention of the need for "fit for purpose" and strong leadership as the five fundamentals of public sector governance. One could consider moving from principles to practice in that country, for example, by using the guidance provided by the Office and other such descriptions of key focus areas.[3] Similarly, the Public Service Commission of Kenya promotes a code of governance detailing practices

[3] Australian National Audit Office, *Public Sector Governance: Strengthening Performance through Good Governance* (Barton, June 2014).

that promote effectiveness, transparency and disclosure, accountability, risk management, internal controls, ethical leadership and good corporate citizenship on the part of State corporations.[4]

IV. Practical considerations

Governance improvements in the context of development

20. Devising an immediate governance agenda involves a series of steps: (a) identifying development priorities for the country; (b) identifying the governance weaknesses that prevent achieving the objectives; and (c) achieving improvements in effective governance to improve progress in ways that comply with maximizing inclusion and operating legitimately, ethically and transparently. When thinking at this level of detail, a host of governance challenges emerge that would not have been obvious if thinking about the big picture of "good governance".

21. This raises the question as to whose interest it is to improve governance and what the aims may be. The altruistic objective of integrity in public administration, fair competition for a country's business sector, fair treatment and human rights, prevention of "theft" of public money, improved business performance and problem-solving to the advantage of a country and the broader focus on people may all be possibilities when translating principles into practices on the ground that are both country and context dependent.

22. For policies to achieve development outcomes, institutions must be of benefit to people and promote honest and responsive government by performing three key functions: enabling credible commitment, enhancing coordination, and inducing implementation and cooperation. Thus, laws and institutional forms matter only to the extent that they are able to generate these functions so as to induce the behaviour of actors necessary to implement the desired policies.

23. Effective performance of these three functions is shaped by the policy arena through which State and non-state actors interact to design and implement policies. Specifically, the relative power of different actors in the arena is critical to enabling, or constraining, policy effectiveness. Unhealthy power asymmetries can lead to persistent policy failure through exclusion, institutional capture and clientelism. Ideally, the law serves to provide checks and balances on the exercise of power, but it may end up either reflecting the interests of the powerful, or giving way to informal deals.

24. The capacity of elites, citizens and international actors to act independently and to make their own free choices can reshape the policy arena to expand the set of effective implementable policies. Ultimately this requires changes in the incentives of actors to pursue reforms, a shift in actors' preferences and beliefs, and changes in the way decision-making occurs to enable marginalized actors to express their views and contribute to or contest policy proposals. Law can be a powerful instrument to reshape the policy arena by changing the payoffs that in turn affect incentives, by

[4] Kenya, Public Service Commission and State Corporations Advisory Committee, *Mwongozo: The Code of Governance for State Corporations* (January 2015).

enhancing focal points around which coordination can occur, and by increasing contestability by underrepresented actors.[5]

25. To address these political dynamics on the ground, one Committee member found it helpful to get away from technical language and to think about who makes the decisions, what resources are allocated, why decision went the way they did, and so on. That then leads to subordinate questions about vested interests (Who?), the procurement process and the relative spend/value for money (What resources?), and so on. If writing a guide for civil society or the general public it might be aimed at helping them to understand what questions they could ask and what answers might be satisfactory, that is, what their expectations should be of government administration, for example whether an administrative practice could be considered fair and reasonable under a country's constitution.

Outcomes versus rules and the progressive realization of objectives

26. In addition to being relevant, specific and non-prescriptive, a practice may be considered "good" if there are strong empirical links to principles of effective governance, that is, between pragmatic improvements in governance and the ultimate outcomes of interest. In some respects, the evidence base will be quite extensive, providing as it does the foundation for widespread agreement on administrative norms and guidelines at the international and regional levels.

27. One member of the Committee observed that all too often one sees rule-based frameworks set up in countries to deal with important issues, such as participation or corruption, only to see the rules circumvented in clever ways. The difficultly is that when underlying attitudes do not change, informal workarounds may simply be established so as to suggest that the framework is in place while enabling historical behaviour to continue.

28. By way of example, there are countries that view an annual event with business and civil society as consultation. This arms-length practice results from legislation dating back a number of years prohibiting public servants from speaking with non-state sectors. The original intention was to support integrity in the public service, but the rule is now so entrenched that anyone outside the public service is seen as a risk rather than as a body or person with a right to be consulted. The legislation can further lead to nepotism and corruption because of secret and restricted relationships, even though all the necessary requirements have been fulfilled.

29. The behaviour of public servants is constrained in many ways and it is entirely reasonable for it to be constrained by codes of conduct, legislation and/or managerial guidelines. Nonetheless, those who are interested in adopting certain practices should do so with a view to promoting policy objectives, consistent with agreed governance principles, and in order to maintain a focus on development outcomes in their ongoing administration.

[5] For a discussion of how unequal distribution of power in a society interferes with policy effectiveness, see *World Development Report 2017: Governance and the Law* (World Bank, Washington, D.C., 2017).

30. Consistent with the above is the notion of solving particular problems in particular local contexts through the creation of an authorizing environment for decision-making that encourages delegation and experimentation. This would give rise to active, ongoing and experiential (and experimental) learning and the iterative feedback of lessons into new solutions, by engaging broad sets of agents to ensure that reforms are viable, legitimate and relevant, that is, are politically supportable and practically implementable.[6]

31. For similar reasons, it is suggested that indicators not be included in the basic framework of governance principles. However, existing work on indicators may be of interest inasmuch as established indicators could refer to practices that are in turn linked to general or specific principles of responsible and effective governance. A relevant initiative in this area is the global indicator framework of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators. Also relevant are the oft-cited World Bank governance indicators and Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) public sector statistics.

V. A way forward

32. Bearing all of the foregoing in mind, the challenge will be to begin in such a way that the principles and practices can be developed into a useful, practical resource of an ongoing and evolving nature while also leaving room for the possibility of connecting the work to helpful operational standards and case studies at a lower level in due course. Of the formats presented in the initial paper by the Secretariat at the fifteenth session of the Committee, the Declaration of Principles for International Statistics came closest to encapsulating the Committee's general view of how to structure the work and how much detail would be appropriate.[7]

33. An eventual advantage of this work over other operational guidelines, such as the European Union/OECD principles of public administration, could be their universality, explicit link to the 2030 Agenda, and simplicity. Greater weight and priority might be given to any practice enshrined in law or in an agreement which is binding, that is, one that has a dispute resolution process and/or defines jurisdiction in the event of a dispute. Such practices, with a legal basis or not, should be backed up by empirical evidence, recognizing again that the particular application may be different in different contexts. An effort would be needed to locate the relevant empirical evidence in the literature for each practice area.

34. The support of interested members of the Committee and of the broader public administration field could be helpful in this respect and could lend greater legitimacy to the exercise. This could entail direct contributions and consultations, for example on the part of the members, and/or further scholarly review and public scrutiny of the taxonomy, as revised, in particular of empirical links between the principles and practices. Links to more detailed technical guidelines and case

[6] Based on the work of Woolcock, etc.; see also Sabel.

[7] See the document entitled "Declaration of principles for statistical activities in international organizations" (available from http://unstats.un.org/unsd/accsub/2005docs-5th/sa-2005-2.pdf), which was prepared in February 2005 on the basis of the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics adopted by the Statistical Commission in April 1994 and the guiding principles for good practices in technical cooperation for statistics, adopted by the Commission in March 1999.

studies for each practice area, at different levels and in connection with different Sustainable Development Goals, could also be helpful.

35. As a first step, interested members of the Committee may wish to: (a) provide further guidance on the overall approach and basic features of a set of internationally recognized principles of responsive and effective governance; and (b) review and comment, as appropriate, on the indicative elements arising from the initial scan of United Nations commitments.

Annex

Indicative elements of a set of internationally agreed principles of effective governance (for discussion)

Principle	*Examples of good practices to implement this principle*	*Related references*
Elements of effectiveness		
1. Competence	Professional civil service	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, articles 6 (2) and 7 (c); Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, article 4 (1) (i); Convention against Corruption, article 7 (1)
	Proper financial management	Addis Ababa Action Agenda, paras. 20, 22, 37, 93, 95, 98 and 118; New Urban Agenda, para. 152
	Performance management	2030 Agenda, paras. 74, 77 and 79; Addis Ababa Action Agenda, para. 129; New Urban Agenda, para. 158
	Efficiency in delivery of public services	
	Economy in public expenditure	
2. Sound public policy	Regulatory quality management	Convention against Corruption, article 5 (3); Addis Ababa Action Agenda, paras. 36 and 116
	Policy coherence	2030 Agenda, para. 13 and target 17.14; New Urban Agenda, paras. 47, 72, 80, 86 and 88
	Risk management	New Urban Agenda, paras. 30, 78
3. Cooperation	Non-interference	Convention against Corruption, article 4 (1); International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, article 1; 2030 Agenda, paras. 18, 21, 38 and 55
	Friendly relations	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, articles 2 (1), 13(1) and 15 (4); Convention against Corruption, articles 46 (1) and 60 (2)
	Public, public-private and civil society partnership	2030 Agenda, para. 45; New Urban Agenda, paras. 21, 48, 81, 82, 153 and 154; Addis Ababa Action Agenda, paras. 10, 48 and 87

Principle	*Examples of good practices to implement this principle*	*Related references*
Elements of accountability		
4. Integrity	Promotion of public interest and ethics	Convention against Corruption, article 6 (1) (b)
	Countries have legislation that prohibit corruption; corruption prevention legislation is enforced	Convention against Corruption, article 5 (1)
	Countries have an anti-corruption agency; the anti-corruption agency is free of political interference	Convention against Corruption, article 6 (1) and (2)
	Adherence to rule of law	Convention against Corruption, article 11 (1); 2030 Agenda, target 16.3
	Privacy protection	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, article 22
5. Transparency	Access to information	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, articles 4 (1) (h) and 21; International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, article 15 (2); Convention against Corruption, articles 7 (4) and 10; Addis Ababa Action Agenda, paras. 26 and 127
	Open government	Addis Ababa Action Agenda, para. 125; New Urban Agenda, para. 160
	Freedom of the media	Addis Ababa Action Agenda, para. 20
6. Independent oversight	Financial disclosure requirements are in place for public servants; these rules operate in practice	
	Active civil society	Convention against Corruption, article 13 (1)
	Independence of courts	
	Access to justice	2030 Agenda, target 16.3
	Independent oversight institutions	Addis Ababa Action Agenda, para. 30

Principle	*Examples of good practices to implement this principle*	*Related references*
Elements of inclusiveness		
7. Non-discrimination	Access to public service on general terms of equality	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, article 25 (c); Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, article 9 (1); International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, article 5 (f); 2030 Agenda, para. 25; Addis Ababa Action Agenda, para. 12
	Equal treatment before the law	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, article 14.1; International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, article 3; Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, article 5 (2)
	Inclusion	International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, article 7; Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, articles 19, 24 and 27 (1) (g); Addis Ababa Action Agenda, para. 21; New Urban Agenda, paras. 40 and 42
	Equitable fiscal and monetary policy	Addis Ababa Action Agenda, para. 91
	Social equity	2030 Agenda, paras. 4, 8 and 19; New Urban Agenda, para. 11; Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, article 1; International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, articles 7 (a) and 9
8. Participation	Public consultation	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, article 4 (3); Addis Ababa Action Agenda, article 30
	Equality of opportunity	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, article 3; 2030 Agenda, para. 20; New Urban Agenda, para. 27; International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, article 5 (c)
	Representation	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, article 25 (a); Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, article 29 (a)

Principle	*Examples of good practices to implement this principle*	*Related references*
	Voice	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, article 2.1; Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, article 29 (b); New Urban Agenda, paras. 14 and 41
9. Subsidiarity	Fiscal, political and administrative decentralization	2030 Agenda, para. 34; New Urban Agenda, paras. 15, 16, 87, 89, 135 and 136
	Territorial planning and spatial development	New Urban Agenda, paras. 15 and 49
10. Intergenerational equity	Sustainable development	2030 Agenda, paras. 18 and 34; Addis Ababa Action Agenda, para. 1

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Ensuring effective implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals through leadership, action and means: strategies for integrated action to achieve poverty eradication: implications for public institutions

Poverty eradication through regional development: the case of Brazil

Note by the Secretariat

The Secretariat has the honour to transmit to the Committee of Experts on Public Administration the paper prepared by Committee member Alexandre Navarro Garcia. The content of the paper and the views expressed therein are those of the author and do not imply any expression of opinion on the part of the United Nations.

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Poverty eradication through regional development: the case of Brazil

Summary

The present paper provides an in-depth picture of poverty in Brazil where, in rural areas, there has historically been a dichotomy between a large contingent of extremely poor small producers, notably in the North-east region of Brazil, and a handful of very wealthy agribusiness owners with large estates in every corner of the country. Such inequalities have been exacerbated by advances in agricultural research and technology, as a result of the classic interplay between landowners (in the form of land rent), wage earners (in the form of wages) and capitalist leaseholders (in the form of capital profits). The separation of strategies for agricultural research and development from public policymaking in other areas such as health, education, infrastructure and finance adds to the challenge.

Little has helped to reduce these inequalities and improve socioeconomic conditions for small rural producers. Subsidies and loans provided by the State, for example, have tended to benefit the major owners of national agribusiness interests. Proposals to create a national fund for regional development to address disparities have shown promise but have not been fully realized.

The author argues that a number of concrete actions are needed to address poverty in Brazil and move towards achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 1 and related targets. Such actions include the creation of a national fund for development of the five regions of Brazil, along the lines of the European Regional Development Fund, with 50 per cent of its resources allocated to less developed areas; easing of limits on budgetary commitments and financial assistance to the regions; promulgation of the Brazilian regional development policy in the form of a national law rather than as a decree; and administration of the regional development policy through the institutionalization of a national system of regional development.

Drawing on the experience of Brazil, the author concludes that the implementation of public policy instruments, such as a national plan for regional development, should be considered in countries seeking to eliminate poverty in its various dimensions. Such policies could promote enhanced and diversified economic activity in disadvantaged areas, inter alia, by addressing the social challenges that impede development.

I. Introduction

1. Eradicating poverty and hunger was one of the Millennium Development Goals. In the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, countries recognize that eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including extreme poverty, is the greatest global challenge and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development. Poverty is addressed in the 2030 Agenda as a multidimensional phenomenon that goes beyond questions of income and resources and concerns well-being and the sustainability of livelihoods in broad terms. Hunger, malnutrition and limited access to education and other basic services are among its more visible facets. In the 2030 Agenda, inclusive economic growth and the creation of decent jobs that promote equality are seen as solutions.

2. Some 836 million people in the world live in extreme poverty. Some 70 per cent of those living in extreme poverty are to be found in Southern Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. Efforts to reduce extreme poverty must take such geographic considerations into account. Similarly, the spatial distribution of the poor must be considered at the national level, in particular in a country such as Brazil, each of whose five administrative regions are larger than many countries.

3. Brazil is a country of contrasts. On the one hand, there is extreme, persistent and widespread poverty, notably in the rural part of the North-east region. On the other hand, that region is immensely rich, the result of four decades of heavy investment in agribusiness research, abundant credit, subsidies and debt securitization. Wealth, however, tends to be highly concentrated, with the result that millions of poor people coexist alongside a few hundred extremely well-off individuals.

4. A number of initiatives have been introduced to combat poverty at the national level in Brazil. One of the more widely recognized is the conditional cash transfer programme known as Bolsa Família (family scholarship), which has had a positive impact on income in poor households. However, such programmes may be unsustainable in the long run as they are subject to prevailing economic conditions, which can change. They may also create an ongoing dependency among several population groups on payments to meet basic needs.

5. Given regional disparities in the incidence of poverty, an important additional remedy in the Brazilian case could be the implementation of a national plan for regional development, focused on measures that promote longer-term socioeconomic benefits. Such a plan would comprise public policies that promote decent work, facilitate income generation through direct credit to small producers, invest in water and sanitation infrastructure, expand access to quality education and training, and encourage the appropriate use of technology and traditional local knowledge. In sum, the situation calls for a policy response very much in line with the aspiration and commitments of the Sustainable Development Goals as applied to the five regions of Brazil.

II. Rural poverty in Brazil

6. Brazilian society is still strongly marked by poverty and income inequalities, which have their origins in the concentrated ownership of rural properties, associated in particular with the abolition of slavery in the second half of the nineteenth century. At that time, people of African descent and immigrants formed a huge population of individuals who were legally free but who nonetheless remained poor by virtue of the Land Law of 1850, among other factors. The Land Law confirmed the claims of the pre-1850 cultivators to land ownership — claims that originated in a system of crown grants of public lands — making purchase the only means of acquiring rural properties. Effectively denied access to landholdings and having limited social or economic mobility within the existing agrarian structures, large contingents of poor rural dwellers flowed into urban areas in the second half of the nineteenth century.

7. Brazilian society is also profoundly marked by the extremely long period of slavery of both indigenous peoples and people of African descent. Starting in 1930, a large influx of immigrant labourers added to the already heterogeneous labour force. The answer to this growing expansion of poor people in Brazil could have been the deployment of targeted policies for regional development, the introduction of which was discussed after the Second World War. In the absence of such policies, the large number of people living in poverty continued to increase.

8. Methodologically, there are several approaches to measuring poverty. All approaches seek to obtain indicators that can be compared at the international level and that can identify and measure cross-border common factors and levels of deprivation. Consequently, policies can be identified for each specific context.

9. According to the economist Thirukodikaval Srinivasan, the three purposes of poverty indicators are: (a) to depict the extent of the poverty problem and the profile of the poor over time at regional, national and global levels; (b) to align this profile with the correct policies required to tackle and reduce poverty; and (c) to mobilize global resources and support for the achievement of these policies.[1] One of the most common ways of measuring extreme poverty, referred to in Sustainable Development Goal 1 on ending poverty, is the parameter of "less than $1.25 a day".

10. The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean proposed a method to assess poverty known as the "cost of basic needs". This method compares household income with the satisfaction of basic needs by establishing poverty lines. It identifies a minimum income level that allows the members of a household to satisfy their basic needs within a previously defined time and space. This level is derived from the calculation of the cost of a basic food basket, including products and services. The method assesses the population's needs regarding nutrition, food availability, relative prices and differences between metropolitan, urban and rural areas.[2]

[1] Thirukodikaval N. Srinivasan, "The unsatisfactory state of global poverty estimation" in *In Focus* (September 2004), p. 3. Available from http://www.ipc-undp.org/pub/IPCPovertyInFocus4.pdf.

[2] Instituto Interamericano de Cooperação para a Agricultura, *A Nova Cara da Pobreza Rural: Desenvolvimento e Questão Regional*, vol. 17, p. 58 (Brasília, 2013). Available from www.iicabr.iica.org.br/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/S%C3%A9rie-DRS-vol-17.pdf.

11. Another method used to measure poverty is that of "multidimensional poverty", based on the work of Amartya Sen.[3] According to Mr. Sen, poverty is one of the ways by which human beings are deprived of freedom. In particular, he regards freedom as having various dimensions: (a) economic, which determines the individual condition for consumption, production and exchange; (b) political, regarding the presence of civil and political rights (voting, choice and political participation); and (c) freedom of social opportunities, for example, access to basic education and health services. In the context of this method, it would be necessary to adopt a multidimensional approach to the construction of poverty indicators.

12. For the purposes of the present paper, which focuses on rural poverty, the household per capita poverty line was considered to be between one quarter ($64.57) and one half ($129.15) of the Brazilian minimum wage ($258.30 a month) in 2009. Such a criterion facilitates the identification of groups able to access social policies such as the national programme for strengthening family farming, Bolsa Família and Bolsa Estiagem (drought scholarship). Based on this criterion, the poor would be divided into three main subgroups: those with monthly incomes between $258.30 and $129.16 would be considered to be quasi-poor, those with monthly incomes between $129.15 and $64.58 would be considered poor and those with monthly incomes below $64.58 would be considered extremely poor.

13. Extreme rural poverty in Brazil has a regional distribution and is mainly concentrated in the north-east. In this subnational region, 9 million people live in rural areas and receive an income of less than $64.58 a month. The State of Bahia leads the extreme poverty ranking in the north-east, with almost 2 million people in that category, while the States of Pernambuco and Ceará have about 900,000 people in total living in extreme poverty.

14. There is a need for aggregate data on household income to be complemented by data on population to more clearly identify who the poor actually are. Illiteracy has the highest prevalence in the North-east region. Although illiterate people are found among the poor, quasi-poor and extremely poor, their highest incidence is in the group defined as quasi-poor. This is possibly attributable to the fact that the criteria applied by government social programmes tend to give priority to illiterate people. For younger people, weaknesses in the educational system are a relevant challenge to be tackled both in terms of promoting human development and of ensuring future integration in the labour market. Such factors could determine whether young people will overcome the poverty predicament threatening their future. Women and girls also face disadvantages owing to social and cultural factors that intensify the already numerous effects of poverty.

15. No less dramatic and worrying is the issue of child labour, which prevails in the poorest Brazilian region, the North-east. In places where educational policies are less precarious, such as in the South and South-east regions of Brazil, child labour is much lower. In this situation, it is necessary to carefully review the conditional cash transfer policies promoted by the Government of Brazil to ensure that the provision requiring that children remain in school in order for families to receive the benefit yields the expected results.

[3] Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1999).

16. With regard to access to land, the Brazilian experience shows that landless individuals live in extreme poverty. In the North-east, 65.9 per cent of extremely poor individuals are landless; in the North and the South-east the proportion of extremely poor individuals who have no land is 67.7 per cent and 82.4 per cent respectively. The high percentage of extremely poor individuals who do not have access to land in the South-east region is attributable to the migration of poor people from the North-east and has arisen despite the fact that the South-east region is considered to be the most developed in the country.

17. Poverty and inequality in Brazil may thus be seen as related, to varying degrees, to the lack of policy reforms aimed at expanding access to the means of production (including land) and addressing the specialization of the workforce. Illiterate farmers, child labourers and families deprived of land are an integral part of this picture. Another national challenge which deserves urgent attention is access to water and sanitation, particularly among extremely poor households. In the North-east region, 57.3 per cent of those living in extreme poverty do not have a water connection in their home and 48.4 per cent do not have sewage treatment. This has to be seen against the backdrop of the ambitious targets in the 2030 Agenda.

18. If nothing is done to improve specialized capacity and increase the productivity of the Brazilian countryside, poverty will continue to be the greatest challenge in agricultural areas, especially in the region that accounts for most of the rural poor, the semi-arid part of the North-east region. This semi-arid area accounts for some 70 per cent of Brazilian smallholdings in the North-east region (and contains 3.78 million people considered extremely poor, with an average income of $58.8 per month, at 2006 prices). It needs targeted action to overcome poverty through enhancing agricultural activities in the context of sustainable development.

19. The main observation and hypothesis of the present paper is that the current Brazilian productive structure is based on extreme specialization and concentration of production within the more dynamic activities and regions. As a result, less and less labour is absorbed and societies become less inclusive. That trend merely consolidates a productive structure that increasingly impoverishes the small producer.

III. Rural wealth in Brazil

20. The origins of the massive production and agricultural extraction industry in Brazil date back to 1502, when the king of Portugal, Dom Manuel, leased land to a wood exploitation consortium led by Fernão de Noronha.

21. After more than 500 years, Brazil is today a huge and successful rural producer of more than 300 types of crops that generate 350 products distributed in 180 markets worldwide. The agribusiness sector as a whole (inputs, agriculture, agro-industry and distribution) generated 188.1 million tons of grain (2015/16); 26.2 million tons of meat (2016); 38.9 million tons of fruit (2014); and 35.2 billion litres of milk (2014). In 2015, it yielded $181.3 billion, representing 27 per cent of gross domestic product and employing 37 per cent of the Brazilian workforce.[4]

[4] Embrapa, *Embrapa em Números* (Brasilia, 2016). Available from www.embrapa.br/documents/10180/1600893/Embrapa+em+N%C3%BAmeros/7624614b-ff8c-40c0-a87f-c9f00cd0a832.

22. Agricultural production figures are equally impressive, as demonstrated by the growth in grain production alone: 45 million tons in 1975, 58 million in 1990 and 187 million in 2013. In 1990 the balance of agricultural trade was $7 billion and by 2011 it had multiplied tenfold to reach $73 billion. In 2013, it stood at $83 billion. Historical records confirm the expansion of agribusiness in the face of stagnation or even retraction in other sectors of the Brazilian economy. The trade surplus of the agricultural sector in the period from 1989 to 2013 had a cumulative positive balance of $797.1 billion, compared with an accumulated deficit of $417 billion in the industry and services sectors.[5] However, this overall positive result relates to the activities of only a few thousand people — the Brazilian large landowners.

23. Agricultural development strategies need to address two national challenges. The first challenge is to improve the situation of isolated areas and territories, traditional communities and the rural poor. This could be done through the deployment and entrenchment of quality education; universal, sustainable employment; and public services such as water security and access to sanitation. Moreover, the deployment and operationalization of local productive arrangements, mechanisms for integration, vocational centres and appropriate technologies are social inclusion policies which would need to be pursued in parallel to basic infrastructure reforms.

24. The second challenge is to reform federal taxation through the creation of a related fund. That would make it possible to pool the revenues from the state tax on the circulation of goods and services (ICMS) and from value-added tax. The fiscal tug of war in Brazil affects the federal balance and appears to increasingly impoverish the poor. Addressing this situation may require the pooling of the revenues from the aforementioned state tax through the creation of a national fund for regional development which should benefit the poorest regions most. If it had the ability to independently commit resources, under article 9 of Complementary Law No. 101 of 2000 (Fiscal Responsibility Law), the national fund for regional development could tackle a sizeable part of structural poverty with a regional approach within a generation. This would need to be supported by domestic law (as called for in article 9, paragraph 2 of the Complementary Law) as well as by a capable national system of management and administration permeated by transparency and accountability.

The agricultural "Silicon Valley" of Brazil

25. Wealth and poverty are both the solution and the problem for Brazilian rural areas. Such areas come under the mandate of the Brazilian Agricultural Research Corporation (EMBRAPA), a public company created in 1973 to promote the modernization of the Brazilian countryside, enabling the sustainable development of agriculture through the generation, adaptation and transfer of knowledge and technology. The creation of EMBRAPA established a continuous and accelerated process of technological and organizational transformation that allowed rural producers to acquire skills that did not exist previously and enabled the commercial expansion of Brazilian agriculture in the following years.

[5] Agrostat, Estatísticas de Comércio Exterior do Agronegócio Brasileiro database.

26. Agriculture is fundamental to a world that, by 2050, will have an additional 2.3 billion new individuals (9.3 billion compared with the current 7 billion), requiring increased food production. Such an increase in population will require EMBRAPA and other similar institutions to increase global agricultural production by 70 per cent in developed countries and 100 per cent in developing countries, as well as to expand the crop supply for biofuels.

27. EMBRAPA promoted a noteworthy agricultural expansion that had a significant impact on the life and consumption patterns of Brazilians. Data from the Institute of Economic Research Foundation (FIPE) indicate that between 1975 and 2007, the cost of food in the State of São Paulo, the richest in the country, decreased by 5 per cent (and remains at that level to the present day). Bean production in Brazil increased from 2.23 million tons in 1973 to 2.7 million tons in 2014. At the same time, the planted area was reduced from 3.8 million hectares in 1973 to 1.9 million hectares in 2013. This represents a productivity increase of 131 per cent. EMBRAPA has thus contributed to new food consumption patterns and has enhanced primary food access by the most deprived populations.

28. This phenomenon is labelled the "Silicon Valley" of Brazilian agriculture but it is a valley of the rich, not the poor. In the twenty-first century, such agricultural innovation will become increasingly relevant and important in addressing the challenges of poverty and hunger. Results could, however, be enhanced by monitoring the source and nature of the expenditure as well as limiting restrictions and contingencies associated with the budgeting and financial operations of the proposed national fund for regional development.

One solution and one problem: the Methuen Treaty and the theory of comparative advantage

29. In 1703, under the Methuen Treaty, the King of Portugal promised to buy from England, at friendly rates, all the fabric that it could sell him. In exchange, the English monarch authorized the import of Portuguese wines, taxing them at only two thirds of the taxes charged on French products.

30. The Treaty improved the English trade balance in relation to Portugal, rapidly developed English textile production and reduced dependence on imports of wine from France, a country that had historical rivalries with England. Also as a result of the Treaty, the gold reserves coming from the colony of Brazil did not stop in Portugal but went directly to England to finance the industrial innovations implemented by industrialization.

31. Brazil was directly affected by the trade between Portugal and England, particularly after the arrival in Rio de Janeiro of Dom João and the royal court in 1808, upon their escape from Napoleon. In order to purchase the facilities and luxuries produced in the Industrial Revolution, Portugal, in 1810, forced a duty of 15 per cent on goods imported to Brazil from the United Kingdom, applicable to all signatories of the Commerce and Navigation Treaty. This was even lower than the duties applicable to Portuguese goods (16 per cent) or goods from other countries

(24 per cent).[6] Except with regard to the production of wines, Portugal became an "economic colony" of the United Kingdom and a similar situation affected Brazil.

32. According to the theory developed at that time by the English economist David Ricardo, the economic surplus generated by the production of wine in Portugal would finance the purchase of English cloth. A simple example, repeatedly mentioned in Brazilian scientific, political and academic circles, illustrates the theories of both Methuen and Ricardo, and can be applied in several different ways to the case of Brazil today. For instance, to import a ton of semiconductors (chips or heated sand) Brazil pays $350,000. Brazilians then need to sell 21,000 tons of iron ore or 1,700 tons of soybeans to buy just one ton of chips. If this ratio is applied to more complex technology areas such as space, Brazil would need to sell even more: 258,000 tons of iron or 149,000 tons of soybeans simply to pay for the rental of a satellite launch rocket, according to Roberto Amaral, former Brazilian Minister of Science and Technology.

33. In line with the theory of comparative advantage, the rich agribusiness sector has never redistributed its dividends to the poor. Nonetheless, the creation of the national fund for regional development would only require the redistribution of 1.6 per cent of 2015 profits. That would be more than enough to support all the aspects of a Brazilian national plan for regional development, including education and professional training; science, technology and innovation; infrastructure; productive development; and access to services, for a five-year period.

IV. Towards a strategic regional development policy as a means to reduce poverty

34. Until the Second World War, the idea of regional development was either linked only to the installation and location of industrial units and agricultural activities or based on the provision of services as a result of a top-down hierarchical macroregional approach based on the centrality of urban functions.

35. The world's first related experience was the national electrification plan of the former Soviet Union, elaborated by Lenin in 1920 under the State Commission for Electrification of Russia, with the aim of expanding iron casting numbers to 8.2 million tons (from 4.2 million tons in 1913), coal extraction to 62.3 million tons (from 29.1 million tons in 1913), regional hydroelectric potential to 1.75 million kW (from 189,000 kW in 1913) and gross industrial production by 180 to 200 per cent compared to 1913. Intended to last 10 to 15 years, the plan had largely exceeded all established indicators by 1935.[7]

36. In 1928, the national planning commission introduced a regional dimension to the plan. At that time there was a geopolitical preoccupation with Siberian settlement which had some commonalities with the concerns of Brazil about the

[6] Carlos Gabriel Guimarães, "O Comittee de 1808 e a defesa dos interesses ingleses com a Corte no Brasil", paper prepared for the XXIV Simpósio Nacional de História, Associação Nacional de História, São Leopoldo, 2007. Available from http://snh2007.anpuh.org/resources/content/anais/Carlos%20Gabriel%20Guimar%E3es.pdf.

[7] Academia de Ciências da Rússia. *Manual de Economia Política*, chap. XXI (1959). Available from https://www.marxists.org/portugues/tematica/livros/manual/21.htm.

North-east region and the Amazon region in the same period. The crisis of 1929, which generated the worst economic depression of the last century, served as an awakening to other countries, especially industrialized countries, about the need to address regional inequalities.

37. A more obvious example of a regional development policy was the creation in 1933, during the New Deal period, of the Tennessee Valley Authority, a government agency of the United States of America backed with private capital. Aimed at the development of the region, which covers 105,000 km^2 across seven states, the policy measures anticipated flood control, construction of hydroelectric dams, expansion of navigation channels of the Tennessee river basin, infrastructure construction, including irrigation programmes, industrial growth and modernization, urban development, service structuring, environmental health measures in rural areas and disease control (more than 30 per cent of the local population was at the time affected by malaria). The measures implemented by the Tennessee Valley Authority established practices and actions supported by a model of regional development based on the planning of a region that was considered poor but with potential for development owing to its natural resources.[8]

38. An equally important example of a tool for the implementation of regional development plans is the establishment of fiscal incentives aimed at lowering the cost of access to capital and production, a systematic approach adopted by Italy with the creation of the Cassa del Mezzogiorno in 1950. This type of financial measure was later disseminated to other countries, including Brazil, which implemented a system of fiscal incentives for the industrialization of the North-east region with the creation of the Superintendency for the Development of the North-east (SUDENE) in 1959.

39. At the end of the 1940s, to avoid urban, economic and social problems resulting from high urban concentration, France embarked on an ambitious policy of productive decentralization and territorial restructuring. This was aimed at reducing the size of the population in Paris and repopulating rural areas of the country. The policy instruments included targeting investments by State-owned enterprises to selected regions and implementing a bold and diversified infrastructure programme.

40. Latin America as a whole was not isolated from the aforementioned challenges and a number of regional development plans and policies were implemented, such as the border and basin programmes in Argentina (Patagonia) and Mexico. In Venezuela, the regional development programme in the city of Guyana, at the confluence of the rivers Caroní and Orinoco, aimed to transform the region into an urban-industrial growth pole, including through the construction of a hydroelectric dam, a steel mill and a new city. In a 1972 publication on regional development in Latin America, Walter Sthor listed 72 other regional development plans or programmes in Latin American countries.[9]

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[8] Andrey Minin Martin and Leonardo Dallacqua de Carvalho. "Entre a doença e progresso: considerações sobre o Tennessee Valley Authority e o controle da malária (1933-1948)", *Dimensões*, vol. 34, pp. 280-306 (2015). Available from www.periodicos.ufes.br/dimensoes/article/download/11119/7766.

[9] Walter Sthor, *El Desarrollo Regional en América Latina: Experiencias y Perspectivas* (Buenos Aires, Ediciones SIAP, 1972).

41. In Brazil, characterized by semi-arid conditions and recurrent drought in the North-east region, and constant insecurity in connection with the demarcation, protection and settlement of the Amazon region, regional development has been a constant concern since the late nineteenth century. Many public institutions were created in an attempt to find regional solutions focusing on the territories and appropriate cultural solutions to address the endemic problems associated with drought and poverty in the North-east region.

42. Thus, the Imperial Commission of 1877 began the implementation of plans for national integration and regional development, aimed at addressing the problem of drought and focusing mainly on the North-east region where most of the poor resided. It proposed, among other actions, the development of transportation infrastructure, the construction of dams and the diversion of the São Francisco River. With the establishment of the Republic of Brazil in 1889, the Commission did not complete its work. In addition, an estimated 500,000 people relocated or were transferred to the Amazon region, in an event unprecedented in Brazil, for work opportunities linked to the exploitation of rubber, which emerged as a new export product.[10]

43. In 1904, commissions were created to analyse the effects of the drought on the North-east region, notably the States of Ceará and Rio Grande do Norte, and consider solutions. The same year, the Inspectorate of Works against Drought was created. It was transformed into a Federal Inspectorate of Works against Drought in 1906 and finally, in 1945, into the National Department of Works against Drought, a structure linked to the Ministry of National Integration.

44. With resources derived from budgetary laws, a special fund, created in 1920 for cultivable land irrigation works in the North-east of Brazil, held 2 per cent of the federal budget. The 1923 Constitution added other lines of expenditure, thereby earmarking 4 per cent of the federal budget for the control of drought.

45. In 1945, based on the Tennessee Valley Authority experience, the São Francisco Hydroelectric Company was created. This company, linked to the Ministry of Energy, still exists. The Constitution of 1946 established other budgetary lines linked to the development of the North-east region.

46. With this variety of budgetary lines targeting the central problem of the North-east region, the São Francisco Valley Development Commission (now the São Francisco and Parnaíba Valley Development Company) was created in 1948, as part of the Ministry of Integration. In 1951, the Banco do Nordeste do Brasil was established.

47. These institutions in their totality, however, may be seen as having acted within an archaic system of regional development, with a top-down orientation, in isolation and without identifying the overall reasons for the persistence of poverty. This is because they have adopted macroregional approaches as their basic method of study. They also focus on exogenous measures, such as large investments without social control.

[10] Celso Furtado, *Formação Econômica do Brasil*, chap. XXIII (São Paulo, Companhia Editora Nacional, 2005). Available from www.afoiceeomartelo.com.br/posfsa/Autores/Furtado,%20Celso/Celso%20Furtado%20-%20Forma%C3%A7%C3%A3o%20Econ%C3%B4mica%20do%20Brasil.pdf.

48. The modern model of regional development requires a bottom-up orientation and approaches at multiple levels that have a national focus, from analysis and exploration of local potential to social engagement and empowerment of local actors in the implementation of policies and investments, treating local diversity as an asset to be assessed and realized. The proposed implementation of a national policy for regional development set out in the present paper is one of the possible paths, based on policies already implemented in other countries. This strategy would avoid the usual issues associated with poverty in any country, including limited opportunities for personal and professional development, mainly owing to the lack of access to quality education, health and employment, which results in a migratory process towards regions considered more dynamic.

49. The national plan for regional development is an attempt to overcome these challenges, with the aim of eradicating poverty. An additional challenge is finding a political consensus capable of generating a federative pact that places such a policy above other sectoral strategies and policies. In the absence of this political and institutional consensus, the attempt by the Brazilian Ministry for National Integration (formerly Ministry of the Interior) to implement the first national plan for regional development in 2003 seems to have generated limited results.[11]

50. The effort to resume planning and regional policies in Brazil under a new and modern approach has clearly yielded limited results. The main objectives of the approach, which were to reverse the trajectory of regional inequalities and explore the endogenous potential of the diverse Brazilian regions, were not actually met. As mentioned earlier, a possible fundamental element, even today, would be to create, budget for and finance a national fund for regional development to address, inter alia, the following aspects:

(a) National coverage. Because the characteristics of macroregions are no longer representative of Brazil as a whole, ensuing national coverage requires not only action at multiple geographical levels but also the application of intraregional policies throughout the territory;

(b) Effective regional development institutions. In the past, these were rendered institutionally fragile for recurrent reasons such as unbridled corruption;

(c) Regional development as cross-cutting action. This requires regional policies to be linked up with the action of federal government agencies for different sectors in partnership with the private sector and civil society.

51. Regarding the organization of the public institutions to be involved in the implementation of the national plan for regional development, three coordination levels were proposed at the federal, macroregional and subregional levels:

(a) At the federal level, the creation of the National Integration and Regional Development Policy Chamber and the Federative Coordination Committee;

(b) At the macroregional level, for the North, North-east and Central-west regions, the emphasis on the importance of strategic development plans, as well as

[11] Brazil, Ministry of National Integration, *I Conferência Nacional de Desenvolvimento Regional*: Documento de Referência (Brasília, 2012). Available from www.mi.gov.br/c/document_library/get_file?uuid=54bce099-503a-4076-8613-d90dd6107c79&groupId=10157.

the possible recreation of the three Superintendencies, which would be responsible for coordinating actions in their respective areas; and

(c) At the subregional level, the response of forums and development agencies in coordinating and linking together the governance programmes of the Ministry for National Integration around priority areas.

52. The first national plan for regional development was important, even if it had very limited results, since it represented the first national effort to implement a national policy for regional development, in addition to discussing the paradigms of how such regionalization would be achieved. Nevertheless, the implementation of the first national plan was negatively affected by the lack of four main factors: (a) creation of a fund; (b) institutionalization of coordination at the national level; (c) an adequate legal framework; and, last but not least, (d) a sufficient budget. Without adequate funds, no policy can succeed.

53. In the face of these shortcomings, the Ministry of National Integration assumed leadership on the implementation of a second national plan for regional development and promoted a discussion that took place between 2012 and 2013, with the collaboration of technicians and public and private experts. The latter attended the First National Conference on Regional Development, which involved debate in the 27 states and 5 Brazilian macroregions.

54. The outcome of the Conference was reproduced in the form of a bill,[12] drafted by the then Minister of National Integration. The bill is currently at the deliberation stage in the National Congress. As reflected in the second national plan for regional development, it proposes the implementation of policies geared towards a more balanced spatial development, respecting and exploring the country's diversity, while promoting integration and economic, social and territorial cohesion. This scope is expressed in two objectives, namely:

(a) To sustain a path of reversing interregional and intraregional inequalities, allowing for endogenous resources and cultural, social, economic and environmental specificities;

(b) To create conditions for more equitable and balanced access to public goods and services in Brazil, reducing the inequalities inherent in the birth location of some individuals.

55. As a general guideline, the second national plan for regional development aims:

(a) To structure the national system for regional development;

(b) To create a national fund for regional development;

(c) To focus on the regional dimension in the federal Government's main policies and plans with territorial impact, having the national plan for regional development as a central policy;

[12] Brazil. Institui a Política Nacional de Desenvolvimento Regional. Projeto de Lei do Senado No. 375 (2015). Available from www.senado.leg.br/atividade/rotinas/materia/getPDF.asp?t=169159&tp=1.

(d) To regard diversity as a key asset for territorial and regional development, based on the identification and exploitation of new opportunities and areas of potential;

(e) To combine equity and competitiveness in regional and territorial productive development strategies;

(f) To encourage innovative activities and technologies, and the "green economy", which are the bearers of the future;

(g) To make the criteria for granting financing and fiscal incentives for the national fund for regional development more agile, by integrating the various regional development funds with other fiscal instruments;

(h) To conclude agreements for the establishment of targets with Government in all spheres and with civil society in the fields of infrastructure, education and human resources training, and strengthening regional, state and local innovation systems, as well as the universalization of basic public services;

(i) To implement its information and monitoring systems as part of its ongoing assessment.

56. To avoid what happened with the first national plan for regional development, some political-administrative decisions are needed, namely:

(a) The creation of the national fund for regional development;

(b) The institutionalization of the national system of regional development;

(c) The enactment of ordinary legislation, thus providing the necessary normative framework for a state policy to be incorporated by all public agencies in all its dimensions;

(d) The inscription of a specific chapter in the Brazilian budgetary laws.

V. Conclusion

57. In Brazil, on the one hand, a very small number of wealthy producers own vast areas of land under highly mechanized cultivation, making huge investments in research, science, technology and credit supply. On the other hand, millions of small farmers live in conditions of extreme poverty, mostly in the North-east (semi-arid) region. They live on small plots of land and have limited access to technical assistance, seeds and innovations in handling and production. They also lack access to rural credit and depend for the most part on continued benefits such as Bolsa Família.

58. A realistic solution is for the work of EMBRAPA, the largest agribusiness research company in the world, to benefit the lives of the poorest; however, this has not been achieved and its work has instead helped the country's wealthy landowners. This situation is not only attributable to EMBRAPA. It is also explained by a lack of coordination and other investment policies which would contribute to the resilience of isolated poor areas and territories, whose populations have historically been without access to minimum levels of education, sanitation and means to cope with natural disasters.

59. In response to this structural imbalance, the author proposes the possible implementation of a regional development policy — as has been done in other parts of the world where it has already produced satisfactory results in the fight against poverty. The discussion was initiated and took shape in the Ministry of National Integration in 2011. Currently the text of the proposed policy is being debated in the National Congress with a view to the implementation of a second national plan for regional development, a measure that is necessary in view of the shortcomings of the first such plan, as explained earlier in the paper.

60. The national plan for regional development may soon be the solution for the immense rural misery of Brazil, once it is anchored in national policy by means of a bill supported by budgetary resources. It would require a normative framework coordinated by federal, regional and local planning and execution bodies, including arrangements in partnership with EMBRAPA.

61. The legal framework establishing regional development as a national policy in Brazil requires the creation of a national fund for regional development and a national system of regional development. Among other objectives, this should:

(a) Define targets and ranges for reducing inter- and intraregional inequalities in terms of quality of education by taking into account age distortion and rates of school dropout in basic education, as well as investments and efforts required for the fulfilment of the agreed targets;

(b) Strengthen regional systems and state and local innovation, considering appropriate technologies, local skills and potential, social inclusion, sustainable development and environmental concerns;

(c) Include and prioritize within the national plan those actions required by the structuring of the polycentric network of cities and by the guidelines for productive integration defined in the plan;

(d) Promote the development of production through the identification and exploitation of opportunities and potential by local and regional authorities;

(e) Establish a regional programme for the implementation of policies for the universalization of basic public services based on the criterion of a development deficit;

(f) Define a support strategy to promote the sustainability of Brazilian municipalities, consistent with the strategic network of cities, and promote efforts to strengthen new urban centres.

62. The aforementioned solution could help to disseminate models for implementing the first and primary objective of the 2030 Agenda in the Brazilian semi-arid region.